

Work Ethics as Predictors of Employee Job Performance: Evidence from a Sri Lankan Local Government Institution

Kaludeva Uthpala Sandamini Silva¹, Shehani S E Joseph²

¹NSBM Green University, Department of Logistics, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

²NSBM Green University, Department of Management, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

ussilva@students.nsbm.ac.lk, shehani.j@nsbm.ac.lk

Abstract

Work ethics play a vital role in shaping employee job satisfaction and overall organizational performance, particularly within public sector institutions where ethical standards and individual values may vary considerably. Understanding the relationship between work ethics and job performance is therefore essential for promoting sustainable growth in Sri Lankan government organizations. The purpose of this study was to examine the predictive relationship between work ethics and employee job performance in a Sri Lankan local government institution in the Western Province, grounded in Miller's Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP).

Adopting a deductive and quantitative research approach, primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire based on the MWEP. A sample of 300 employees from various divisions of the organization was targeted using convenience sampling, yielding 278 valid responses (response rate: 92.7%). Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS to examine relationships between key dimensions of work ethics, hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work, and job performance.

Multiple regression analysis revealed that work ethics significantly predict employee job performance, with all examined dimensions showing positive associations with performance outcomes ($R^2 = .716$). Centrality of work ($\beta = .313$) emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by self-reliance ($\beta = .264$), hard work ($\beta = .178$), and morality ($\beta = .155$).

The study provides context-specific insights for human resource practitioners and administrators within the Sri Lankan local government sector, contributing to the development of ethical and productive public institutions.

Keywords: *Work Ethics, Employee Job Performance, Hard Work, Self-Reliance, Morality, Centrality of Work, MWEP, Sri Lankan Public Sector*

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Problem

Work ethics have long been recognized as a fundamental driver of employee behavior, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. Work ethics refer to a system of values and moral principles that shape individuals' attitudes toward work, including diligence, responsibility, integrity, perseverance, and commitment. These values influence how employees perceive their roles, interact with colleagues, and fulfill their responsibilities within an organization (Osibanjo et al., 2015). In an era characterized by increasing demands for accountability, transparency, and efficiency, work ethics have become especially relevant for organizations seeking sustainable performance outcomes.

The importance of work ethics is particularly evident in public sector organizations, where employees function as custodians of public trust and resources. Unlike private sector institutions, public organizations are primarily driven by service delivery and social welfare rather than profit maximization. Consequently, ethical conduct and strong work values are essential for ensuring effective governance, equitable service provision, and public confidence in state institutions (Viswesvaran et al., 1998). Weak work ethics within public sector organizations can result in inefficiencies, reduced productivity, misuse of resources, and declining citizen satisfaction, ultimately undermining organizational legitimacy and national development objectives.

In the Sri Lankan context, local government institutions play a critical role in delivering essential public services, implementing policy decisions, and facilitating community development. Employee performance within these institutions directly affects service quality, administrative efficiency, and citizen satisfaction. However, observed variations in performance levels across public sector organizations suggest that differences in ethical orientations and work-related values may be a contributing factor. Understanding how specific dimensions of work ethics predict employee performance within Sri Lanka's public sector is therefore an important yet underexplored area of inquiry.

1.2. Justifications

This study is justified on three grounds. First, empirical research examining work ethics in non-Western public sector contexts remains limited. Much existing research has been conducted in Western economies or private sector environments, where organizational cultures, institutional arrangements, and performance expectations differ substantially from public sector organizations in developing countries. As a result, the generalizability of prior findings to non-Western public sector contexts remains uncertain. Cultural norms, socio-economic conditions, and governance structures may shape

how work ethics values are interpreted and enacted by employees, thereby influencing performance outcomes in unique ways.

Second, the specific dynamics of the Sri Lankan public sector, characterized by unique cultural values, governance structures, and service delivery challenges, warrant context-specific investigation. Sri Lanka's cultural context, rooted in Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, and Islamic traditions, shapes work values and ethical orientations in ways that may differ from Western conceptualizations. Understanding these context-specific relationships is essential for developing culturally appropriate management practices.

Third, understanding how work ethics predict job performance can inform evidence-based human resource practices aligned with Sri Lanka's Sustainable Development Goal commitments, particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Ethical work behavior is closely aligned with the principles of decent work, including fairness, responsibility, and sustainable productivity. Investigating the role of work ethics in enhancing employee performance can thus provide valuable insights for administrators seeking to strengthen public sector governance and support national development objectives.

1.3. Scope and Significance

This study focuses on a major government organization in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, serving an urban population of approximately 500,000 residents and employing over 1,200 permanent staff across multiple service divisions including administration, finance, engineering, public health, and community development. The study examines the relationship between four dimensions of work ethics (hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work) and employee job performance among permanent employees.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends the cross-cultural application of the MWEF framework and provides empirical evidence from a developing country's public sector context. Practically, the findings offer insights that may inform recruitment, training, and performance management systems within Sri Lankan local government institutions.

1.4. Research Aim and Questions

The primary aim of this study was to examine whether and to what extent work ethics predict employee job performance at a local government institution in Sri Lanka.

Research Questions:

- What is the impact of hard work on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka?
- What is the impact of self-reliance on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka?
- What is the impact of the centrality of work on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka?
- What is the impact of morality on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka?

Research Objectives:

- To analyze the impact of hard work on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka.
- To examine the impact of self-reliance on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka.
- To evaluate the impact of centrality of work on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka.
- To assess the impact of morality on employee job performance at the government organization in Sri Lanka.

2. Literature Review

Work ethics has emerged as a central construct in organizational behavior research, reflecting the moral principles and values that guide individuals' attitudes toward work and professional conduct. Contemporary organizations increasingly recognize that employee performance is not solely determined by technical competence or structural incentives but is deeply influenced by ethical orientations and value systems (Meriac, 2012). This literature review is grounded in Miller's Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP), which conceptualizes work ethics as a multidimensional construct encompassing hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work (Miller et al., 2002). The MWEP provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding how ethical beliefs translate into observable workplace behaviors and performance outcomes.

This review synthesizes theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and methodological approaches related to work ethics and job performance. It highlights what is known, identifies gaps in the literature, particularly in public sector and non-Western contexts, and justifies the present study's focus on Sri Lankan local government institutions.

2.1. Job Performance: Conceptualization, Dimensions, and Empirical Insights

Job performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively fulfill the duties and responsibilities associated with their roles. It is a foundational concept in human resource management and organizational psychology, serving as a key indicator of organizational effectiveness (Aroosiya & Ali, 2014). Early performance research focused narrowly on task output and efficiency; however, contemporary frameworks adopt a multidimensional perspective that better reflects the complexity of modern work environments.

Rotundo and Sackett (2002) proposed a widely accepted tripartite model of job performance, comprising task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Task performance relates to core job responsibilities, contextual performance includes discretionary behaviors that support the organizational environment, and counterproductive behaviors refer to actions that harm organizational functioning. Adaptive performance has since been added to capture employees' ability to respond effectively to change, uncertainty, and novel demands (Pradhan & Jena, 2017).

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that job performance is shaped by both individual and contextual factors, including motivation, leadership, organizational culture, and ethical climate (Valentine et al., 2011). Importantly, ethical orientations have been identified as a significant antecedent of performance, particularly in public sector organizations where accountability, transparency, and service quality are paramount (Dogbe et al., 2024).

Despite the extensive literature on job performance, several gaps remain. Much of the existing research relies on self-reported measures, raising concerns about common method bias. Additionally, performance studies are disproportionately concentrated in private sector or Western organizational contexts, limiting their applicability to public institutions in developing countries. These limitations underscore the need for context-specific research examining how ethical values influence job performance in public sector settings.

2.2. Work Ethics and the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile

Work ethics refers to a system of moral principles and values that guide individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward work (Osibanjo et al., 2015). This study adopts Miller's Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) due to its comprehensive and empirically validated framework (Miller et al., 2002).

The MWEP originally comprises seven dimensions, but this study focuses on four, hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work, based on their particular relevance to public sector contexts. These dimensions directly relate to core public sector values such as diligence, accountability, ethical conduct, and commitment to service (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008).

2.3. Hard Work as a Dimension of Work Ethics

Hard work is one of the most frequently cited dimensions of work ethic and reflects a belief in the moral and instrumental value of effort, persistence, and dedication (Miller et al., 2002). Rooted in the Protestant Work Ethic tradition, hard work emphasizes disciplined effort as a pathway to personal growth and professional success (Mudrack, 1999). Within organizational settings, this dimension manifests as diligence, perseverance under pressure, and willingness to exceed formal job requirements.

Empirical research consistently links hard work to positive workplace outcomes. Employees who value hard work demonstrate higher levels of engagement, reliability, and goal orientation (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Organizations that recognize and reward diligent effort experience improvements in productivity, employee retention, and morale. Hard-working employees are also more likely to develop expertise through deliberate practice, contributing to sustained performance improvements (Ericsson et al., 1993).

However, prior research also identifies potential limitations. Overemphasis on effort without adequate attention to ethical safeguards and work-life balance can result in burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and counterproductive behaviors (Maslach et al., 2001). Moreover, many studies operationalize hard work using single-item measures, limiting construct validity and comparability across contexts.

In relation to job performance, hard work is widely regarded as a direct predictor of task completion, efficiency, and quality of output. Studies by Pradhan and Jena (2017) confirm that employees with strong hard-work orientations exhibit superior performance due to their persistence, attention to detail, and time management skills. Nevertheless, limited research has examined this relationship within public sector organizations in developing countries, where bureaucratic constraints may moderate the effort–performance link. Addressing this gap, the present study examines how hard work influences job performance in a Sri Lankan government organization context.

2.4. Self-Reliance and Ethical Work Behavior

Self-reliance refers to an individual's belief in their ability to work independently, take initiative, and assume responsibility for outcomes (Miller et al., 2002). Within the MWEP framework, self-reliance captures autonomy, accountability, and confidence—qualities increasingly valued in contemporary organizations operating under uncertainty and complexity.

Research suggests that self-reliant employees demonstrate proactive behaviors, effective problem-solving, and higher levels of personal accountability (Van Ness et al., 2010). In public sector environments, where procedural rigidity can delay decision-making, self-reliance enhances operational efficiency and innovation (Carter, 2017). Empirical studies indicate that self-reliant employees are more likely to accept challenges, learn from mistakes, and contribute constructively to organizational goals (Yu & Davis, 2016).

Despite its benefits, excessive self-reliance can undermine collaboration and knowledge sharing if not balanced with teamwork (Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997). Prior research often neglects this duality, treating self-reliance as uniformly beneficial. Additionally, many studies fail to distinguish between healthy autonomy and counterproductive individualism, limiting theoretical clarity.

From a performance perspective, self-reliance has been linked to higher task efficiency, adaptability, and leadership potential. Self-reliant employees require less supervision, manage time effectively, and demonstrate resilience under pressure, qualities directly associated with superior job performance. However, empirical evidence from public sector organizations, particularly in South Asian contexts, remains sparse. This study addresses this gap by examining the impact of self-reliance on employee job performance within a Sri Lankan local government institution.

2.5. Morality as a Core Ethical Dimension

Morality represents an individual's commitment to ethical principles such as honesty, fairness, integrity, and respect for others (Gbadamosi, 2004). Within the MWEP framework, morality guides ethical

decision-making and behavior, particularly in situations involving ambiguity or conflicting interests (Miller et al., 2002).

Extensive research highlights the role of morality in shaping organizational culture and employee conduct. Employees with strong moral orientations are less likely to engage in unethical behaviors such as fraud, misconduct, or abuse of resources (Mayer et al., 2012). Ethical workplaces characterized by fairness and transparency foster trust, collaboration, and psychological safety, which in turn enhance employee well-being and performance (De Cremer & Schminke, 2010).

However, morality research faces several methodological challenges. Many studies rely on self-assessments, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Additionally, moral behavior is often examined independently of organizational systems, overlooking the interaction between individual ethics and institutional norms (Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008).

In relation to job performance, moral employees are more likely to comply with organizational policies, cooperate with colleagues, and contribute positively to organizational objectives (Valentine et al., 2011). Ethical behavior reduces counterproductive work behaviors and strengthens commitment, thereby enhancing both task and contextual performance. Despite these findings, limited empirical work has examined morality–performance relationships in public sector organizations within developing economies. The present study contributes to addressing this gap by analyzing how moral values influence job performance in an organizational setting.

2.6. Centrality of Work and Employee Performance

Centrality of work refers to the importance individuals attach to work relative to other life domains (Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000). High work centrality indicates that individuals view work as a core component of their identity and life purpose (Miller et al., 2002). This orientation is often associated with strong commitment, motivation, and perseverance.

Empirical studies demonstrate that employees with high work centrality exhibit greater engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997). Such employees are more likely to internalize organizational goals, invest effort, and demonstrate resilience in demanding roles. Work centrality has also been linked to intrinsic motivation, which sustains performance even in the absence of external rewards (Linz & Chu, 2012).

Nevertheless, the literature also highlights potential risks. Excessive work centrality may lead to workaholism, burnout, and impaired ethical judgment (Carter, 2017). Prior studies often fail to distinguish between healthy commitment and maladaptive overinvestment, limiting theoretical nuance.

In terms of job performance, work centrality is positively associated with persistence, reliability, and quality of output. Employees who derive meaning from their work are more likely to demonstrate

sustained performance across task and contextual dimensions. However, empirical evidence from public sector organizations, particularly in developing countries, remains limited. This study seeks to examine how work centrality influences employee job performance within a Sri Lankan government organization, contributing to a more balanced understanding of this relationship.

The reviewed literature underscores the significant role of work ethics in shaping employee job performance. While prior studies provide valuable insights, several gaps persist. First, there is a lack of empirical research applying the MWEF framework in public sector organizations within developing countries. Second, existing studies often examine work ethic dimensions in isolation, neglecting their combined influence on job performance. Third, methodological limitations, including reliance on self-report measures and cross-sectional designs, constrain causal inference.

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a quantitative methodology using validated scales to examine the impact of hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work on job performance in a Sri Lankan local government context. By focusing on the government organization, the study contributes context-specific insights that extend existing theory and inform public sector management practice.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, deductive research design to examine the predictive relationships between work ethics and employee job performance within a Sri Lankan public sector organization.

3.1. Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of permanent employees across multiple departments of the selected local government institution. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, a target sample of 300 was determined. Questionnaires were distributed to 300 employees selected through convenience sampling. Of these, 278 usable responses were received, yielding a response rate of 92.7%. Twenty-two questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete responses ($n=15$) or insufficient attention patterns ($n=7$).

3.2. Conceptual Framework

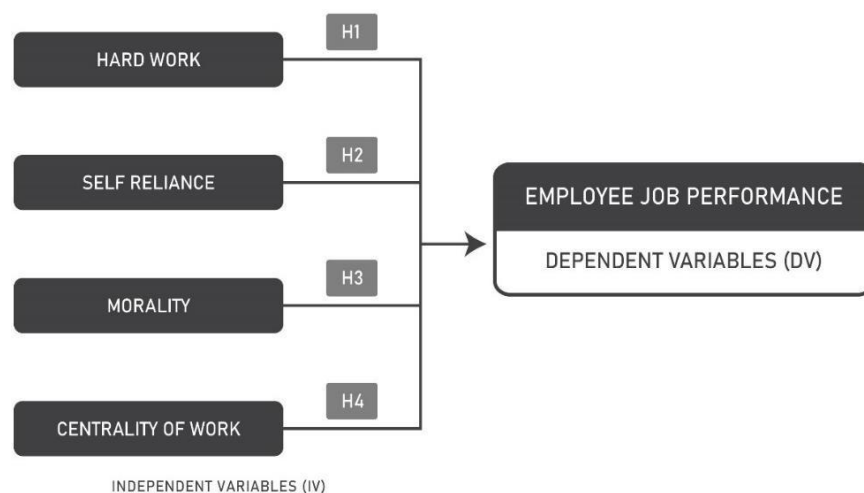
The conceptual framework proposes that **work ethics** positively influence **employee job performance**.

Work ethics are operationalized through four independent dimensions derived from Miller's MWEP: hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work. Employee job performance is treated as a multidimensional dependent construct comprising task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behavior. The model assumes both individual and combined effects of ethical dimensions on performance outcomes, consistent with ethical behavior and organizational performance theories.

3.3. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are developed in this study, based on the conceptual framework

Figure 6: Conceptual Framework (Miller et al., 2002; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002)



- H1: There is an impact of Hard Work and Employee Job Performance

(Davis (2019) and Eisenberger et al. (2005) indicate that valuing hard work enhances employee responsibility, efficiency, and performance outcomes.)

- H2: There is an impact of Self-Reliance and Employee Job Performance

(The presence of self-reliance in employees, marked by independent decision-making and responsibility, is linked to higher levels of innovation and leadership success. (Yu & Davis, 2016)

- H3: There is an impact of Morality and Employee Job Performance

(Research indicates that ethical workplace behavior strengthens trust and cooperation between colleagues, which subsequently enhances group performance and work output (Mayer et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2002)

- H4: There is an impact of Centrality of Work and Employee Job Performance

(The degree to which employees value their work roles shows significant positive relationships with commitment attitudes, engagement states, and performance results. (Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997; Williams & Patel, 2022).

These hypotheses are formulated based mainly on the previous research conducted by Miller et al.(2002) and Osibanjo et al. (2015) which propose work ethics as a multidimensional construct that influences job performance. The study will use quantitative techniques to test their relevance in a particular organizational setting.

5.3.1. Operationalization

Table 13: Operationalization

Variables	Measure	Source	Scale	Items
Hard work	Satisfaction	(Miller et al., 2002)	Likert scale	5
	Fulfilment Achievement			
	Effort Success			
Self-reliance	Foundation Independence	(Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002)	Likert scale	5
	Value Responsibility			
	Judgement			
Morality	Respect	(Gorman, & Thomas, 2013)	Likert scale	5
	gratification			
Centrality of work	Leisure	(Miller et al., 2002)	Likert scale	5
	Productivity			
	Efficiency			
Job Performance	Task	(Rotundo & Sackett, 2002)	Likert scale	5
	performance			
	Contextual			
	performance			
	Adaptive			
	performance			
	Counterproductive			
	work			
	behavior			

3.4. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research principles throughout its conduct. Ethical approval was obtained from the university ethics committee prior to data collection. Written permission was obtained from the relevant government authority. All participants provided written informed consent after being briefed on the study's purpose and their rights. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was assured through coded questionnaires with no identifying information. Data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

Descriptive statistics revealed that the sample was predominantly male (66.9%), reflecting the gender composition commonly observed in Sri Lankan local government institutions. The largest proportion of respondents (49.8%) fell within the 26–35 age group, indicating a relatively young workforce in early to mid-career stages. A majority of respondents were married (59.4%), suggesting the presence of family responsibilities that may influence work attitudes and behavior.

In terms of work experience, 74.0% of respondents reported more than five years of service, indicating a workforce characterized by institutional familiarity and job stability. This demographic diversity supports the representativeness of the sample and provides a solid basis for examining variations in ethical orientation and job performance.

4.2. Descriptive Findings on Study Variables

The descriptive analysis of study variables indicated that respondents reported **above-average mean scores** across all dimensions of work ethics, hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work. Similarly, employee job performance dimensions also recorded favorable mean values, suggesting generally positive self-assessments of performance-related behaviors.

Notably, the highest levels of agreement were observed in the dimensions of **self-reliance** and **centrality of work**, highlighting employees' confidence in independent task management and the importance placed on work in their lives.

4.3. Reliability Analysis

Table 14: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Hard work	0.830
Self reliance	0.867
Morality	0.859
Centrality of work	0.881
Job performance	0.889

Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha confirmed strong internal consistency across all constructs. As shown in **Table 2**, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.830 (hard work) to 0.889 (job performance), exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). These results indicate that the measurement instruments were reliable and suitable for further inferential analysis.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed **significant positive relationships** between all dimensions of work ethics and employee job performance at the 0.01 significance level (see **Table 3**). Centrality of work exhibited the strongest correlation with job performance ($r = 0.802$), followed by self-reliance ($r = 0.785$), hard work ($r = 0.777$), and morality ($r = 0.771$). These findings suggest that employees who demonstrate stronger ethical orientations tend to report higher levels of job performance.

Table 15: Correlation Analysis

Correlation					
	Hard work	Self-Reliance	Morality	Centrality of work	Job Performance
Hard work	1	.814**	.793**	.836**	.777**
Self-reliance	.814**	1	.811**	.801**	.785**
Morality	.793**	.811**	1	.833**	.771**
Centrality of work	.836**	.801**	.833**	1	.802**
Job Performance (DV)	.777**	.785**	.771**	.802**	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.5. Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 16: Multiple Regression Analysis

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.031	4	12.258	173.041	<.001 ^b
	Residual	19.480	275	.071		
	Total	68.511	279			
a. Dependent Variable: DV1_Finalmeanvalue						
b. Predictors: (Constant), IV4_Finalmeanvalue, IV2_Finalmeanvalue, IV3_Finalmeanvalue, IV1_Finalmeanvalu						

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the combined and individual effects of work ethic dimensions on job performance. The ANOVA results (Table 4) confirmed that the overall model was statistically significant ($F = 173.041$, $p < .001$), indicating that the independent variables collectively explained a significant proportion of variance in job performance.

Table 17: R Square

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.846 ^a	.716	.712	.26615
a. Predictors: (Constant), IV4_Finalmeanvalue, IV2_Finalmeanvalue, IV3_Finalmeanvalue, IV1_Finalmeanvalue				

The model summary (Table 5) showed an **R² value of 0.716**, indicating that approximately **71.6% of the variance in employee job performance** was explained by hard work, self-reliance, morality, and centrality of work. This reflects a strong predictive capability of the model.

Table 18: Coefficient estimates

Predictor	B	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	0.203	—	1.292	.197
Hard Work	0.200	.178	2.690	.008
Self-Reliance	0.275	.264	4.143	<.001
Morality	0.158	.155	2.376	.018
Centrality of Work	0.313	.313	4.520	<.001

Note. *R-squared* = .716, *p* < .001

Coefficient estimates (Table 6) revealed that **centrality of work ($\beta = 0.313$)** had the strongest positive effect on job performance, followed by **self-reliance ($\beta = 0.264$)**, **hard work ($\beta = 0.178$)**, and **morality ($\beta = 0.155$)**. All predictors were statistically significant ($p < .05$), leading to the acceptance of all alternative hypotheses (H1–H4), as summarized in **Table 7**.

Table 19: Summary of Hypothesis

Independent			
Variables	P Value	Decision	Explanation
Hard Work	0.008	H1 is accepted (p-value is less than alpha) H0 is Rejected	Hard Work has a significant impact on job performance
Self-Reliance	0.001	H1 is accepted (p-value is less than alpha) H0 is rejected	Self-reliance has a significant impact on job performance
Morality	0.018	H1 is accepted (p-value is less than alpha) H0 is rejected	Morality has a significant impact on job performance

Centrality of work	0.001	H1 is accepted (p-value is less than alpha)	Centrality of work has a significant impact on the job
		H0 is rejected	performance

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the proposition that work ethics significantly influence employee job performance in the public sector. The strong association between **centrality of work and job performance** aligns with Miller et al. (2002), who argue that individuals who perceive work as a central life interest are more committed, productive, and performance-oriented. This finding is also consistent with international studies that link work centrality to organizational citizenship behavior and reduced counterproductive behaviors (Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000).

The significant impact of **self-reliance** on job performance supports prior research emphasizing autonomy and responsibility as critical drivers of employee effectiveness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In public-sector contexts, where bureaucratic constraints often limit flexibility, self-reliant employees may be better equipped to manage tasks efficiently and adapt to operational challenges.

Similarly, the positive effect of **hard work** reinforces classical work ethic theories that associate effort and perseverance with performance outcomes (Weber, 1905/2002). The findings suggest that employees who value diligence and persistence contribute more effectively to task completion and service delivery.

Although **morality** exhibited the weakest standardized effect among the four dimensions, it remained statistically significant, underscoring the importance of ethical conduct, fairness, and integrity in enhancing collaboration and reducing counterproductive work behavior. This aligns with public-sector ethics literature, which emphasizes morality as foundational to trust, accountability, and service quality (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008).

Overall, the results extend existing literature by providing **context-specific evidence from Sri Lanka's local government sector**, a setting that has received limited empirical attention.

4.6. Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of **convenience sampling** limits the generalizability of findings beyond the selected organization. Second, the reliance on **self-reported data** may introduce common method bias and social desirability effects, potentially inflating reported ethical behavior and performance levels. Third, the **cross-sectional design** restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between work ethics and job performance over time.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between work ethics and employee job performance within a Sri Lankan government organization, adopting a Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) framework. Specifically, the study examined four core dimensions of work ethic, hard work, self-reliance, morality, and the centrality of work, and their association with job performance using a cross-sectional survey design and quantitative analysis. Drawing on data from approximately 278 government employees across multiple departments, the findings provide robust empirical support for the ethical–performance linkage in a Sri Lankan public sector context.

The results demonstrate that all four work ethic dimensions are positively and strongly correlated with employee job performance, indicating that employees who hold stronger ethical orientations tend to perform better in their roles. The multiple regression model explained a substantial proportion of variance in job performance ($R^2 = .716$), underscoring the practical significance of work ethics as a performance-enhancing factor. Among the four dimensions, self-reliance and the centrality of work emerged as the strongest predictors, suggesting that employees who demonstrate autonomy, personal responsibility, and a strong psychological attachment to work are more likely to exhibit higher levels of performance. Although hard work and morality were comparatively weaker predictors, both remained statistically significant, reaffirming their continued relevance in shaping employee behavior and outcomes.

These findings align closely with prior theoretical and empirical research that positions work ethics as a foundational driver of individual and organizational performance. Importantly, this study extends the existing literature by contextualizing these relationships within a public sector organization in a developing country, a setting that has received relatively limited scholarly attention. In doing so, the study contributes context-specific evidence that reinforces the applicability of the MWEP framework beyond Western and private-sector environments.

From a practical perspective, the results offer valuable insights for public sector leaders and human resource practitioners. Understanding that ethical orientations, particularly self-reliance and work centrality, play a critical role in performance can inform recruitment, training, and performance management systems. Organizational interventions that promote ethical awareness, autonomy, responsibility, and meaningful engagement with work may enhance both productivity and employee well-being. Furthermore, fostering ethical climates grounded in integrity, loyalty, and fairness can strengthen trust and cooperation, thereby improving overall institutional effectiveness in government organizations.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a single-organization sample and convenience sampling restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported measures introduce the risk

of common method bias and preclude causal inference. Third, although the MWEP framework was employed, only four dimensions were examined, while other potentially influential dimensions such as time management and delay of gratification were excluded. Additionally, minor inconsistencies between the planned and realized sample size highlight the need for greater transparency in reporting.

Building on these limitations, several directions for future research are recommended. Future studies should enhance external validity by employing probabilistic sampling techniques across multiple public sector institutions and incorporating private sector comparisons. Longitudinal research designs and multi-source performance measures, such as supervisor ratings or objective key performance indicators, would help mitigate common method bias and strengthen causal interpretations. Expanding the conceptual model to include additional MWEP dimensions, mediating mechanisms (e.g., work engagement), and moderating factors (e.g., ethical leadership and organizational culture) would further enrich theoretical understanding. Finally, greater methodological transparency through pre-registration, clear reporting of response rates, and reconciliation of sample sizes is encouraged.

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence that work ethics, particularly self-reliance and the centrality of work, are powerful predictors of employee job performance in the Sri Lankan public sector. By addressing existing gaps and offering a platform for future inquiry, the findings contribute meaningfully to both theory and practice in the fields of work ethics and public sector performance management.

References

- Aroosiya, M. A. C., & Ali, M. A. M. H. (2014). Impact of job design on employees' performance: With special reference to school teachers in the Kalmunai Zone. *Journal of Management*, 8(1), 33–41. <https://doi.org/10.4038/jm.v8i1.7553>
- Christian, M. S., Garza, A. S., & Slaughter, J. E. (2011). Work engagement: A quantitative review and test of its relations with task and contextual performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), 650–663. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024523>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- De Cremer, D., & Schminke, M. (2010). *Leadership and ethics: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dogbe, C. S., Ablorinyi, K. K., Pomegbe, W. W., & Duah, E. (2024). Inducing employee performance among state-owned enterprises through employee ethical behaviour and ethical leadership. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 20(7), 1378–1397. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-08-2023-0370>

- Dogbe, C. S., Abloranyi, K. K., Pomegbe, W. W., & Duah, E. (2024). Inducing employee performance among state-owned enterprises through employee ethical behaviour and ethical leadership. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 20(7), 1378-1397.
- Eisenberger, R., Jones, J. R., Stinglhamber, F., Shanock, L., & Randall, A. T. (2005). Flow experiences at work: For high need achievers alone? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(7), 755–775. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.341>
- Ericsson, K. A., Krampe, R. T., & Tesch-Römer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. *Psychological Review*, 100(3), 363–406. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.100.3.363>
- Gbadamosi, G. (2004). Work ethic and commitment: A study of employees in the Nigerian banking industry. *Employee Relations Journal*.
- Hirschfeld, R. R., & Feild, H. S. (2000). Work centrality and work alienation: Distinctions in the context of traditional and alternative work orientations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(7), 789–800.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- Linz, S. J., & Chu, C. (2012). The role of work centrality in employee engagement and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 27, 215–224. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-011-9248-y>
- Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397–422. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397>
- Mayer, D. M., Aquino, K., Greenbaum, R. L., & Kuenzi, M. (2012). Who displays ethical leadership, and why does it matter? An examination of antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(1), 151–171. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2008.0276>
- Meriac, J. P. (2012). Work ethic and academic performance: Predicting citizenship and counterproductive behavior. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 22(4), 549–553. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2012.01.002>
- Miller, M. J., Woehr, D. J., & Hudspeth, N. (2002). The meaning and measurement of work ethic: Construction and initial validation of a multidimensional inventory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 60(3), 451–489. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1838>
- Mudrack, P. E. (1999). Time structure and purpose, Type A behavior, and the Protestant work ethic. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(2), 145–158. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1379\(199903\)20:2<145::AID-JOB855>3.0.CO;2-J](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(199903)20:2<145::AID-JOB855>3.0.CO;2-J)

- Ng, T. W. H., Sorensen, K. L., & Feldman, D. C. (2007). Dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of workaholism: A conceptual integration and extension. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28(1), 111–136. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.424>
- Osibanjo, A. O., Akinbode, J. O., Falola, H. O., & Oludayo, O. (2015). Work ethics and employees' job performance. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, 12(1), 107–117. Retrieved from <https://repository.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/handle/123456789/41144>
- Parkhurst, J., Fleisher, M., Skinner, N., Woehr, D. J., & Embree, H. (2011). Work ethic as a predictor of task persistence and intensity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*.
- Perry, J. L., & Hondeghem, A. (Eds.). (2008). *Motivation in public management: The call of public service*. Oxford University Press.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.
- Pradhan, R. K., & Jena, L. K. (2016). Employee performance at workplace: Conceptual model and empirical validation. *Business Perspectives and Research*.
- Rotundo, M., & Sackett, P. R. (2002). The relative importance of task, citizenship, and counterproductive performance to global ratings of job performance: A policy-capturing approach. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(1), 66–80. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.1.66>
- Spector, P. E. (2012). *Industrial and organizational psychology: Research and practice* (6th ed.). Wiley.
- Spector, P. E., & Fox, S. (2005). The stressor–emotion model of counterproductive work behavior. *Human Resource Management Review*, 15(2), 151–174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2005.03.002>
- Valentine, S., Godkin, L., Fleischman, G. M., & Kidwell, R. (2010). Corporate ethical values, group creativity, job satisfaction and turnover intention: The impact of work context on work response. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 98(3), 353–372. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0593-1>
- Van Ness, A., Melinsky, A., Buff, R., & Seifert, K. (2010). Exploring generations in the workplace and implications for leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 4(2), 46–60.
- Viswesvaran, C., Deshpande, S. P., & Joseph, J. (1998). Work ethic: Values of managers and professionals and their impact on organizational outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17(4), 365–371. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005726018911>

Yu, K. Y. T., & Davis, H. M. (2016). Autonomy's impact on newcomer proactive behaviour and socialization: A needs-supplies fit perspective. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 89(1), 172–197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12118>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

THE IMPACT OF WORK ETHICS ON EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE: A CASE FROM THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

Dear Respondent,

I am an undergraduate student at The National School of Business Management (NSBM), Faculty of Business, specializing in BSc Business Management (Project Management) (Special). As part of my academic program, I am conducting research on the relationship between work ethics and job performance among employees at the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council, Sri Lanka.

Your participation in this study is highly valued. Please rest assured that all responses will remain anonymous, confidential, and used solely for academic purposes.

Kindly provide accurate responses by selecting the most appropriate option for each question.

Your time and cooperation in completing this questionnaire are greatly appreciated. Thank you for contributing to this research.

Yours faithfully,

K.U.S. Silva.

Demographic characteristics

Please tick the appropriate box.

Gender :

- Male ☐
- Female ☐

Age :

- Below 25yrs ☐
- 26yrs-35yrs ☐
- 36yrs-45yrs ☐
- Above 45yrs ☐

Marital Status:

- Single ☐
- Married ☐

Work Experience:

- Less than 1 Years ☐
- 1 to 3 Years ☐
- 3 to 5 Years ☐
- More than 5 Years ☐

Please indicate your level of agreement, ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree,' for the following statements related to various factors of employees' job performance.

(SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, N- Neutral, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree)

	Statements	Rating				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
NO						
1.	I feel satisfied when I have accomplished a day's work.					
2.	I derive a strong sense of fulfillment from working.					
3.	Completing a challenging day's work brings a deep sense of achievement.					
4.	Success is achieved through consistent and diligent effort.					
5.	Hard work is a proven path to success.					
6.	Success is built on the foundation of self-reliance.					
7.	I aim to develop self-reliance as a core value.					
8.	Independence is crucial for shaping one's own future.					
9.	Responsibility for one's actions is a cornerstone of personal and professional growth.					

10.	It is important to withhold judgment until all relevant information is considered.					
11.	It is important to always treat others the way you wish to be treated, as it fosters mutual respect.					
12.	It is essential to treat others with fairness and integrity in all dealings.					
13.	Delayed gratification often leads to a deeper sense of fulfillment					
14.	Long-term rewards tend to bring greater satisfaction than short-term gains.					
15	The most meaningful achievements often require time and patience.					
16	I value job roles that offer more personal time.					
17	Increased leisure time enhances overall well-being and quality of life.					
18	A greater emphasis on relaxation would lead to a healthier and more harmonious society.					
19	Leisure time is a vital component of a healthy and fulfilling life.					
20	Staying productive and avoiding time-wasting activities is crucial in the workplace.					
21	I completed my work in a timely and effective manner.					
22	I actively pursued opportunities to take on new and challenging tasks.					

23	I developed innovative solutions to address new challenges.					
24	I volunteered for extra tasks to contribute beyond my role.					
25	I occasionally made small issues seem larger than they truly were.					